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ABSTRACT

The diverse forms and changing nature of the American family have important implications for early childhood educators concerned with a multicultural group. In the wake of economic, technological, and energy changes, a single ideal American family no longer exists against which to measure all other family forms. Although the form of the nuclear family will survive and still functions well for some people, other viable forms (such as the aggregate family, the extended family, the single-parent family, and so on) serve the same purposes and should not only be tolerated but valued and appreciated as well. Understanding of various family modes adds new dimension to the role of the young child's teacher, requiring him or her to provide better rapport between the home and school and to be more responsive to the needs of culturally and ethnically different children. Such a dimension can be added only through an integrative and interdisciplinary approach to multicultural education that seeks to educate the "whole child" as a unique human being and to provide the opportunity for each child to reach maximum potential and retain a unique family heritage. (MP)

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NO ONE MODEL AMERICAN FAMILY: A NECESSARY UNDERSTANDING FOR EFFECTIVE MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

THE FOCUS OF THIS PRESENTATION IS ON THE AMERICAN FAMILY, ITS DIVERSE FORMS AND CHANGING NATURE, AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE PHENOMENA FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD, MULTICULTURAL EDUCATORS. MANY PEOPLE TODAY ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE FAMILY, THE MOST IMPORTANT UNIT IN OUR SOCIETY. SURVIVAL OF OUR SOCIETY SEEMS AT STAKE WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THE BASIC ROLE THE FAMILY PLAYS IN DEVELOPING SELF-IDENTITY AS WELL AS GROUP IDENTITY.

THOSE CONCERNED ABOUT THE "DEATH OF THE FAMILY" ARE REALLY TALKING ABOUT THE NUCLEAR FAMILY: THE IDEAL MODEL OF A SMALL FAMILY WITH THE HUSBAND WORKING OUTSIDE THE HOME AND THE WIFE STAYING AT HOME, A POPULAR MODEL WHICH WAS PROMPTED BY THE RISE OF FACTORY AND OFFICE WORK. HOWEVER, TODAY ONLY ABOUT 7 PERCENT OF AMERICANS STILL LIVE IN CLASSICAL NUCLEAR FAMILIES. FIFTY-ONE PERCENT OF MOTHERS OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME.

SINCE THE NUCLEAR FAMILY IS NO LONGER THE NORM, WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE FAMILY, WHAT FORMS ARE TAKING SHAPE, AND WHAT DOES THIS HOLD FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN? IN THE WAKE OF ECONOMIC, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND ENERGY CHANGES, THE FAMILY IS ADAPTING, AS IT ALWAYS HAS IN THE PAST. THE FAMILY IS BEING REDEFINED AND IS DIVERSIFYING. NO LONGER IS THERE ONE IDEAL

MODEL AMERICAN FAMILY AGAINST WHICH ALL OTHER FAMILY FORMS MUST BE MEASURED. ALTHOUGH THE NUCLEAR FAMILY WILL SURVIVE AND STILL FUNCTIONS WELL FOR SOME PEOPLE, THERE ARE OTHER VIABLE FORMS WHICH ARE SERVING THE SAME PURPOSES. ALVIN TOFFLER (THE THIRD WAVE, 1980) HAS EXAMINED THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY AND EASILY IDENTIFIES A MULTIPLICITY OF EMERGING FAMILY FORMS. HE BELIEVES NO ONE OF THESE WILL BECOME A DOMINANT FORM TO REPLACE THE NUCLEAR MODEL. SOME OF THE FAMILY ARRANGEMENTS AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE ARE: THE AGGREGATE FAMILY, THE EXTENDED FAMILY, SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES, COMMUNES, DUAL CAREER FAMILIES, HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGES, TRIBAL GROUPINGS AMONG CERTAIN ETHNIC MINORITIES, CONTRACT MARRIAGES, FAMILY CLUSTERS, TRIAL MARRIAGES, "COTTAGE INDUSTRY" FAMILIES, TO NAME ONLY A FEW POSSIBILITIES. AS TOFFLER CONCLUDES, THE LESSON IN THIS FOR ALL OF US AS NEW FORMS OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY EMERGE IS A TOLERATION OF DIVERSITY.

AS A MULTICULTURAL EDUCATOR, I WOULD ADD TO TOFFLER'S PREVIOUS COMMENT, THAT DIVERSITY IN AMERICAN LIFE AND FAMILY FORMS SHOULD NOT ONLY BE TOLERATED BUT VALUED AND APPRECIATED AS WELL. ACCEPTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING OF DIVERSE FAMILY MODELS SHOULD ENABLE TEACHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN TO PROVIDE BETTER RAPPORT BETWEEN THE HOME AND SCHOOL, AND TO PROVIDE AN EDUCATION THAT IS MORE

RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF CULTURALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIFFERENT CHILDREN.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION GOALS
THE EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER

BEFORE PROCEEDING FURTHER INTO OUR DISCUSSION OF FAMILY DIVERSITY IN THE U.S., WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT THE INTERRELATION OF MULTICULTURAL GOALS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. THE GOALS AND VALUES OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ARE COMPATIBLE AND OVERLAP. BOTH FIND COMMON GROUND IN THE GOAL TO DEVELOP CONCEPTS, ATTITUDES, SKILLS, AND VALUES IN YOUNG CHILDREN. EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' ABILITY TO FULFILL THE GOALS AND VALUES OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION DEPENDS UPON THEIR CONCEPT OF THE FIELD AS WELL AS THEIR ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, AND VALUES.

ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION (AACTE), MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IS EDUCATION WHICH VALUES CULTURAL PLURALISM. MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION REJECTS THE VIEW THAT SCHOOLS SHOULD MELT AWAY CULTURAL DIFFERENCES OR THE VIEW THAT SCHOOLS SHOULD MERELY TOLERATE CULTURAL PLURALISM. INSTEAD, MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AFFIRMS THAT SCHOOLS SHOULD BE ORIENTED TOWARD THE CULTURAL ENRICHMENT OF ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH THROUGH PROGRAMS ROOTED TO THE PRESERVATION AND EXTENSION OF CULTURAL ATLERNATIVES (EMPHASIS MINE). (1973, P. 264).

WITH THIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOALS AND VALUES OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION, THE TEACHER CAN EXAMINE HIS/HER OWN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AS WELL AS PERSONAL ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, AND VALUES CONCERNING OTHERS. PARKER (1977) PROVIDES A GOOD CHECKLIST FOR AN EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER COMMITTED TO MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION TO USE FOR SELF-EXAMINATION. HE SAYS SUCH A TEACHER HAS THE FOLLOWING QUALITIES:

1. PRIZES THE UNIQUENESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND HAS PRIDE IN HIMSELF AND HIS OWN HERITAGE.

2. RECOGNIZES THAT PEOPLE ARE DIFFERENT AND THE SAME, AND SUPPORTS THE RIGHT TO BE DIFFERENT.

3. HAS EMPATHY FOR OTHERS' CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS. EMPATHY IS BASED UPON KNOWLEDGE; THEREFORE, THE TEACHER ALSO NEEDS TO STUDY VARIOUS SUBCULTURES OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY.

4. HAS SKILLS IN HUMAN RELATIONS AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS, WITH THE ABILITY TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY WITH PEOPLE INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY. (P. 26)

STARTING WITH THE CHILD'S HOME

THE FAMILY (WHETHER AGGREGATE, NUCLEAR, OR SOME OTHER FORM) AND THE HOME ARE VITAL DETERMINANTS OF THE YOUNG CHILD'S SELF CONCEPT AND COGNITIVE STYLE. IN ADDITION, AND EQUALLY AS IMPORTANT, THE FAMILY IS THE PRIMARY INFLUENCE ON THE CHILD'S FORMATION OF CONCEPTS, ATTITUDES, AND VALUES. THUS, AN UNDER-

STANDING OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN BEGINS IN THE HOME.

LET'S IMAGINE A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A FIRST GRADE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS. MR. TABOR, THE FIRST GRADE TEACHER AT OAK HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SHOWED THE INQUISITIVE CHILDREN A LARGE, COLORFUL PICTURE OF A SLENDER WOMAN IN AN APRON SERVING BREAKFAST TO BOBBY AND SALLY AND AT THE SAME TIME WAVING GOOD-BYE TO HER HUSBAND, WHO STOOD AT THE OPEN DOOR, BRIEF-CASE IN HAND. [ILLUSTRATION 1] MR. TABOR SAYS TO THE FIRST GRADERS, "LET'S TALK ABOUT THIS PICTURE. ROBERTO, DO YOU SEE ANYTHING IN THE PICTURE THAT YOU THINK IS INTERESTING?" ROBERTO SCRATCHED HIS HEAD, WIGGLED UNCOMFORTABLY, AND FINALLY MUMBLED, "NAW, LOOKS KINDA FUNNY TO ME." "WELL, ALISHA, WHAT ABOUT YOU?" "M-M, THAT MOMMY LOOKS LIKE A MAID I SAW ON T.V. ONCE. DO SOME MOMMIES REALLY DO THAT IN THE MORNINGS? MY MOMMY SLEEPS LATE 'CAUSE SHE WORKS THE NIGHT SHIFT, SO DADDY PUTS THE CEREAL OUT FOR ROBBY AND ME. THEN HE TAKES US TO SCHOOL. SOMETIMES WE'RE NEARLY LATE WHEN HE FORGETS HIS LUNCH PAIL." MIRANDA LOOKS TROUBLED AND BARELY WHISPERS, "MY DADDY WAS CARRYING SOMETHING BIG--BIG LIKE A SUITCASE, WHEN HE LEFT LAST YEAR. HE JUST HOLLERED SOMETHING AT MOMMY AND LEFT." MR. TABOR COMMENTS UNDERSTANDINGLY, THAT ALL FAMILIES DO NOT HAVE A MOMMY AND A DADDY NOWADAYS. THEN ARNIE INTERRUPTS, "YEAH, BUT MY UNCLE ED SAYS HE LOVES ME JUST LIKE DADDY DID--HE EVEN TOOK BILLY AND ME TO THE SHOW.

THEN HE CAME OVER LAST NIGHT ANL ASKED, "YOU KIDS OK? HOW'S ABOUT A HUG FOR ME? I'VE GOT A BIG SURPRISE FOR THE FIRST ONE WHO CAN TOUCH HIS NOSE TO HIS TOES." SMILING, MR. TABOR SAID, "THAT REMINDS ME OF THE TIME MY GRAND DAD SURPRISED US KIDS WITH A 'MAGIC TOY'--IT WAS A WOODEN THING THAT HE HAD CARVED WHICH LOOKED LIKE A CHAIN. HE COULD TWIST IT 'JUST SO' AND THEN IT WOULD FALL APART." LUIZ, WHO HAD BEEN VERY STILL AND UNINVOLVED UNTIL NOW, BURST OUT, "MY PAP'PA DOES MAGIC SHADOWS WITH HIS HANDS, ALL THE TIME. SEE, HE STAYS WITH US IN A LITTLE ROOM ALL HIS OWN. SO EVERY NIGHT HE SAYS, 'WHO WANTS TO GUESS THE MAGIC SHADOW?' SOMETIMES, THE SHADOW LOOKS LIKE A RABBIT OR A MONKEY. MOST TIMES, I GET IT RIGHT, 'CAUSE HE DOES THE SAME ONES OVER, AND OVER." THEN MARY EXCITEDLY TELLS ABOUT HER GRANDMOTHER WHO USED TO MAKE QUILTS FOR THE FAMILY. "NOW, SHE JUST QUILTS FOR FUN." MR. TABOR JOINS IN, "MARY, DO YOU THINK YOUR GRANDMOTHER MIGHT LIKE TO SHOW US SOME OF HER QUILTS?" MARY SAID, "I THINK SO, 'CAUSE SHE'S ALWAYS SHOWING THEM TO PEOPLE. I'LL ASK HER. OK? SHE MIGHT EVEN SHOW US HOW TO QUILT." MR. TABOR SAID, "THAT'S GREAT. I HOPE SHE WILL."

IN HIS DISCUSSION WITH THE CHILDREN, STEMMING FROM THE PICTURE OF A "TYPICAL MODEL," WHITE NUCLEAR FAMILY, MR. TABOR'S GOAL WAS TO HELP THE CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THAT HAVING A DIFFERENT KIND OF FAMILY IS ACCEPTABLE AND

THAT TRADITIONAL SEX ROLES ARE CHANGING. DRAWING FROM THEIR OWN FAMILY STORIES, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT, EVEN AMONG A SMALL GROUP OF CHILDREN, THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF FAMILY ARRANGEMENTS AND SEX ROLES. THERE IS NO ONE MODEL AMERICAN FAMILY THAT FULFILLS THE AMERICAN DREAM (FANTINI AND CARDINAS, 1980, P. XV). YET, MANY CHILDREN'S PICTURE AND STORY BOOKS WOULD HAVE YOUNGSTERS BELIEVE THIS MYTH.

BY SHOWING INTEREST IN THE CHILDREN'S GRANDPARENTS AND ENCOURAGING THEIR PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL, MR. TABOR WAS HELPING THE CHILDREN TO APPRECIATE THEIR OWN HERITAGE AND TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE AGED AND THE YOUNG. MR. TABOR KNOWS THAT CHILDREN NEED TO HAVE SOCIAL INTERACTION WITH PEOPLE OF ALL AGES IN ORDER TO SEE OTHER POINTS OF VIEW AND TO UNDERSTAND HOW OTHER PEOPLE FEEL AND LIVE.

IN AN EXPERIENTIAL MODEL OF TEACHING, INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IS BASIC; WHILE INVOLVEMENT OF GRANDPARENTS IS DESIRABLE, IT IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE. WHEN THE TEACHER IS ABLE TO INVOLVE THEM IN THE CLASSROOM, THE CHILD GETS THE MESSAGE: "MY FAMILY AND BACKGROUND ARE OK, AND I'M OK TOO." BY SHOWING RESPECT AND APPRECIATION FOR THE CHILD'S FAMILY, THE TEACHER IS DEMONSTRATING REAL CARING FOR THE CHILD. ONE MORE BRIDGE HAS BEEN CROSSED IN CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL AND ONE MORE CHILD'S SELF CONCEPT HAS BEEN BOLSTERED.

INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS IN THE CLASSROOM GIVES THE TEACHER AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CHILD'S LEARNING STYLE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE. THESE INSIGHTS CAN BE INCORPORATED INTO THE TEACHER'S DAILY PLANNING FOR INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN AND INTO GENERAL CURRICULUM PLANNING.

FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS WHO SEE THE NECESSITY OF MAKING SCHOOLS RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF ALL CHILDREN, SOME CHANGE NEEDS TO BE EFFECTED IN THE FORM OF BRIDGING MECHANISMS BETWEEN THE SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES. WHEN EXAMINING THE ETHNIC/MINORITY STUDENT'S FAMILY IN RELATION TO SCHOOLS, THE FIRST CONSIDERATION IS TO CHANGE OUR WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT FAMILIES. ACCORDING TO FANTINI AND CARDENAS (1980, PP. XIV-XV), THE OLD VIEW, PARALLEL TO THE MONOCULTURAL, "MELTING POT" THEORY, PROMOTES A SINGLE MODEL--WHITE, MIDDLE CLASS, NUCLEAR--FOR THE IDEAL FAMILY; WHILE A MULTICULTURAL VIEW RECOGNIZES DIVERSE FAMILY MODELS.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ETHNICALLY AND CULTURALLY DIVERSE FAMILIES WHICH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS SHOULD CONSIDER ARE: PARENTING BEHAVIORS, (SUCH AS PUNISHMENT OF AND EXPECTATIONS FOR CHILDREN), PREDOMINANT LEARNING STYLE, BELIEFS, VALUES, TRADITIONS, AND CULTURAL SOCIAL PATTERNS. HOW THESE FACTORS AFFECT THE ETHNICALLY AND CULTURALLY DIFFERENT CHILD'S SCHOOL SUCCESS OR FAILURE ARE MOST RELEVANT TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. SECONDLY, HOW THE

SCHOOL RESPONDS TO THE CULTURALLY AND ETHNICALLY ACQUIRED DIFFERENCES WHICH A CHILD BRINGS TO SCHOOL AND HIS/HER RESULTING SPECIAL NEEDS ARE CENTRAL BOTH TO EARLY CHILDHOOD AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION.

DIFFERENCES WHICH CHILDREN BRING TO SCHOOL

A VALID ASSUMPTION IS THAT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS START WHERE THE CHILD IS--WITH HIS/HER HOME LANGUAGE, CUSTOMS, TRADITIONS, VALUES--AND BUILD ON THE GROWTH OF SELF UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE TO PROMOTE RESPECT AND APPRECIATION OF OTHERS. DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPTS IN CHILDREN IS A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR THEM TO ESTABLISH POSITIVE FEELINGS ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE AS WELL AS TO GROW AS LEARNERS.

WHAT ARE SOME DIFFERENCES BASED ON FAMILY BACKGROUND WHICH CHILDREN BRING TO SCHOOL THAT TEACHERS MUST BE AWARE OF? HOME LANGUAGE IS A MAJOR CONSIDERATION HERE.

LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES

A PRIME WAY AN EDUCATOR OF YOUNG CHILDREN CAN ENHANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD'S SELF-CONCEPT IS TO RESPECT AND BE AWARE OF HIS/HER HOME LANGUAGE OR DIALECT AND USE THIS KNOWLEDGE IN TEACHING. GOODMAN (1970, P. 21) SAYS, "IN THE UNITED STATES THERE HAS BEEN A WIDESPREAD NOTION THAT BILINGUALISM

IN CHILD CULTURE IS NECESSARILY A HANDICAP AND UNDESIRABLE." BECAUSE OF THIS ATTITUDE, GOODMAN BELIEVES THAT BILINGUAL CHILDREN ARE AT A DISADVANTAGE IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS. TO CHANGE THIS SITUATION, THE TEACHER MUST UNDERSTAND THAT LANGUAGE IS AT THE VERY HEART OF CULTURAL IDENTITY; THAT THE BILINGUAL CHILD MAY HAVE INTELLECTUAL ADVANTAGES AND GREATER CONCEPTUAL FLEXIBILITY THAN THE MONOLINGUAL CHILD.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AS WELL AS LANGUAGE DIFFERENCE MAY ALSO PLACE A CHILD AT A DISADVANTAGE IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE, MIDDLE-CLASS SCHOOL SETTING. THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHILD, TAUGHT AT HOME TO BE MORE COOPERATIVE THAN COMPETITIVE, MAY NOT PARTICIPATE IN CLASSROOM GAMES WHERE THERE IS A WINNER AND A LOSER. WILLIAMS AND WILLIAMS (1979) REVEAL IN THEIR STUDY OF CHILDREARING PRACTICES IN THREE MINORITY SUBCULTURES (MEXICAN-AMERICAN, NATIVE AMERICAN, AND BLACK-AMERICAN), THAT CULTURAL VALUES INSTILLED IN THE HOME OFTEN ARE IN DIRECT OPPOSITION TO ANGLO VALUES PROMOTED IN MOST PUBLIC SCHOOLS. FOR EXAMPLE, CLASSROOM CONFLICTS MAY RESULT FROM DIFFERENT TIME ORIENTATIONS: THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN CHILD GENERALLY HAS A PRESENT-TIME ORIENTATION, WHEREAS THE ANGLO TEACHER IS ALMOST ALWAYS FUTURE ORIENTED (PP. 411-412). CONCERNING CULTURAL VALUE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACK HOMES AND ANGLO-DOMINANT SCHOOLS, GAY (1975)

SAYS,

> MANY BLACK CHILDREN'S PROBLEMS IN SCHOOL STEM NOT SO MUCH FROM LIMITED COGNITIVE ABILITIES AS FROM CONFLICTING ORIENTATIONS AS TO THE CONDITIONS AND ATTITUDES MOST APPROPRIATE FOR LEARNING, AS WELL AS THE DIFFICULTIES IN MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM THE FRAMES OF REFERENCE AND WAYS OF BEHAVING OF THE HOME TO THOSE OF THE SCHOOL. (P. 30)

GAY SPECIFIES SOME VALUES INHERENT IN SCHOOLS WHICH CAUSE BLACK CHILDREN ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS. SHE SAYS THAT SCHOOLS PLACE HIGH VALUE ON ORDER, STRUCTURE AND FORMALITY, WHEREAS "BLACKS CONSIDER INDIVIDUALS FUNCTIONING IN INFORMAL GROUP SETTINGS AS MOST CONDUCIVE TO LEARNING" (P. 31). "THEY HAVE A DIFFERENT SENSE OF TIMING AND STRUCTURE WHICH EMPHASIZES SPONTANEITY, IMPROVIZATION AND INTUITIVE FEELINGS" (P. 32).

RACIAL DIFFERENCE

THE PRECEEDING DISCUSSION LEADS THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR TO CONSIDER ANOTHER DIFFERENCE WHICH IS OFTEN A STIGMA AND A BARRIER TO ACHIEVEMENT AND PERSONAL GROWTH FOR SOME CHILDREN, THAT IS, RACE. HERE'S ANOTHER SAMPLE CLASSROOM CONVERSATION. "CAROL OBSERVED THOUGHTFULLY: 'SEE HOW COLORED MY HANDS ARE.' HERMAN COMMENTED, AND QUITE CORRECTLY: 'MY MOTHER'S BROWN SKINNED.'

STEFAN SAID: 'MY MOTHER'S THAT WHITE.' ... THOMAS STUDIES THE CHILDREN AROUND HIM AND SAID: 'THERE ARE TWO WHITE CHILDREN HERE AND ALL THE REST ARE COLORED" (GOODMAN, 1970, P. 37). THESE COMMENTS, RECORDED BY GOODMAN IN RACIALLY INTEGRATED NEW ENGLAND NURSERY SCHOOLS ILLUSTRATE THAT CHILDREN ARE VERY AWARE OF RACIAL ATTRIBUTES IN THEMSELVES AND IN OTHERS AT AN EARLY AGE. GOODMAN NOT ONLY FOUND THAT YOUNG CHILDREM MAKE RACIAL CLASSIFICATIONS ON SUCH THINGS AS DEGREE OF LIGHTNESS OR DARKNESS AND HAIR FORM, BUT ALSO THAT THEY EVALUATE THESE DIFFERENCES. SHE CONCLUDES, "THE SOCIAL DEFINITION OF THE CHILD'S RACIAL IDENTITY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HIS ACTUAL COLOR OR RACIAL FEATURES" (P. 176).

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER OR PARENT WHO HAS CLEAR AND HONEST "PICTURES" ABOUT RACE IN HIS/HER OWN MIND CAN MORE EASILY FIND WAYS OF SPONTANEOUSLY AND SIMPLY PROVIDING EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE FOR THE YOUNG CHILD. OF COURSE, SUCH EFFORTS SHOULD BE ATTUNED TO THE CHILD'S INTEREST, PERSONALITY, AND EXPERIENCE.

"SPLITTERS" OR "LUMPERS?"

COGNITIVE OR LEARNING STYLE IS ANOTHER DIFFERENCE AMONG CHILDREN WHICH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS MUST BE AWARE OF IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN FROM DIVERSE FAMILY BACKGROUNDS. COGNITIVE STYLE REFERS TO THE CHILD'S CHARACTERISTIC PATTERN OR STRATEGY FOR ACQUIRING AND PROCESSING

INFORMATION. SOME CHILDREN ARE "SPLITTERS" AND OTHERS ARE "LUMPERS." THE FORMER TYPE DEMONSTRATES AN ANALYTIC ATTITUDE TOWARD INFORMATION PROCESSING AND IS RELATED TO THE NOTION OF FIELD INDEPENDENCE; WHEREAS, THE LATTER RESPONSE INDICATES A RELATIONAL (OR GLOBAL) APPROACH WHICH IS LINKED TO FIELD DEPENDENCE (J. KAGAN, 1963, P. 74).

COGNITIVE STYLE IS NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH INNATE INTELLIGENCE. COHEN (1969, P. 829) SAYS, "COGNITIVE STYLES ARE INDEPENDENT OF NATIVE ABILITY AND THEY ARE DEFINABLE WITHOUT REFERENCE TO SPECIFIC SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT."

HANSEN'S RESEARCH (1979, P. 241) INDICATES THAT COGNITIVE STYLE IS LINKED CLOSELY WITH THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT IN WHICH THE CHILD IS REARED. THE MAJOR THESIS OF GOODMAN'S WORK (1970) IS THAT CONCEPTS CONCERNING THE CAPACITIES OF CHILDREN, COGNITIVE AND OTHER KINDS, ARE AS MUCH A PART OF CULTURAL PATTERNING AS ROLE DEFINITIONS ARE. THUS, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE THAT EARLY FAMILY INTERACTION PLAYS A CRITICAL PART IN ESTABLISHING A CHILD'S LEARNING ORIENTATION.

SPENCER KAGAN'S RESEARCH BETWEEN RURAL MEXICAN AND URBAN AMERICAN PARENTS (1974, PP. 769-770), PINPOINTS DIFFERENTIAL CHILD-REARING PRACTICE AS ONE OF THE MOST PROBABLY CAUSES OF DIFFERENCE IN COGNITIVE STYLE ORIENTATION. WERNER (1979, PP. 173-179) AND OTHER RESEARCHERS IDENTIFY DIFFERENCES

IN ACHIEVEMENT-MOTIVATION OF MOTHERS, RESTRICTIVENESS AND STRESS ON CONFORMITY, OBEDIENCE TRAINING, ADHERENCE TO AUTHORITY, AND TYPE OF DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT AS CASUAL FACTORS OF DIFFERENCE IN COGNITIVE STYLE.

ETHNIC DIFFERENCE

ANOTHER CLOSELY RELATED AREA OF INFLUENCE WHICH THE EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER MUST BE AWARE OF IS THAT OF ETHNICITY OF THE FAMILY. LONGSTREET (1978) HAS DONE CONSIDERABLE STUDY OF "INTELLECTUAL MODES" AND ETHNICITY. SHE SAYS,

> THE BASIC ASSUMPTION OF THE ASPECT OF INTELLECTUAL MODES IS THAT REGARDLESS OF GENETIC DIFFERENCES, THE WAY CHILDREN EXTERNALIZE THEIR THOUGHTS CAN BE LINKED TO THEIR ETHNIC GROUP....INTELLECT WILL BE EXPRESSED THROUGH BEHAVIORS THAT ARE ACQUIRED DURING THE ETHNIC STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT. TO SOME EXTENT THESE BEHAVIORS REFLECT SOCIAL VALUE PATTERNS CONCERNING THE MOST DESIRABLE, IMPORTANT, AND POSSIBLE WAYS OF USING INTELLIGENCE. HOWEVER, <u>THEY ARE ABSORBED SO EARLY AND USED SO COMPLETELY WITHOUT AWARENESS IN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN THAT THEY BECOME A STRUCTURAL PART OF THE WAY THEY EXTERNALIZE THEIR THOUGHTS ABOUT THINGS</u>--[EMPHASIS MINE] HOW THEY APPROACH A PROBLEM, WHAT THEY GIVE THEIR FULL ATTENTION, THE DETAILS THEY ARE MOST LIKELY TO RECALL, OR THE QUESTIONS THEY

ARE LIKELY TO USE WHILE LEARNING. (P. 107)

IN SUMMARY, RESEARCH SHOWS THAT THERE IS A DEFINITE LINK BETWEEN COGNITIVE STYLE, THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT (INCLUDING SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS), AND THE ETHNICITY OF THE CHILD'S FAMILY. WHILE MANY CHILDREN FROM LOW-INCOME AND/OR CULTURALLY OR ETHNICALLY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS DEMONSTRATE A RELATIONAL (GLOBAL) COGNITIVE STYLE AND FIELD DEPENDENCY, THE RESEARCH ALSO INDICATES THAT SUCCESS IN SCHOOLS IS LINKED TO THE ANALYTIC MODEL. KOGAN (1973, P. 175) SAYS THAT THE VALUE BIAS WHICH SCHOOLS HAVE FOR THE ANALYTIC ORIENTATION INDICATES A "NOT SO BRIGHT" FUTURE FOR FIELD DEPENDENT CHILDREN, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO SPECIFIC PUBLISHED EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THIS PREDICTION.

ON THE "BRIGHTER" SIDE, BOTH KOGAN AND COHEN SUGGEST THAT IN LIGHT OF THE ADAPTIVE SOCIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR FUTURE LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES (E.G. INCREASING INTERDEPENDENCE), FIELD DEPENDENCE MAY BE MORE SOCIALLY RELEVANT THAN FIELD INDEPENDENCE. FOR EXAMPLE, STRENGTHS OF FIELD DEPENDENTS EXIST IN THE AREA OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS AND IN SITUATIONS WHERE COMPROMISE AND CONSENSUS ARE ESSENTIAL (KOGAN, 1973, P. 175).

CURRENTLY, PROBLEMS ARISE FOR THE YOUNG CHILD WHEN THERE IS CULTURE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND HIS/HER HOME. CULTURE CONFLICT SURFACES WHEN THERE ARE DIFFERENT AND/OR CONFLICTING CONCEPTUAL SKILLS BETWEEN THOSE RE-

QUIRED BY THE SCHOOL AND THOSE BROUGHT TO SCHOOL BY THE CHILD. ANOTHER DIMENSION OF CULTURE CONFLICT COMES FROM NEGATIVE VALUE JUDGMENTS BY TEACHERS OF CULTURALLY DIFFERENT CHILDREN BASED ON THEIR SOCIAL BEHAVIORS THAT ARE RELATED TO DIFFERENT COGNITIVE STYLES.

IT IS NO LONGER APPROPRIATE TO USE THE CLASSIFICATIONS OF "DISADVANTAGED" OR "DEFICIENT" FOR CHILDREN. RATHER, THEIR CULTURAL OR ETHNIC DIFFERENCE IS THE MOR' APPROPRIATE DIMENSION TO BE CONSIDERED. CHILDREN MUST BE PERCEIVED ACCORDING TO THEIR PARTICULAR COGNITIVE STYLE, WITH THEIR ACHIEVEMENT BEING MEASURED ON MORE THAN ONE CONTINUUM. THE GENERAL CONSENSUS OF THE RESEARCH IS THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENT, NOT DEFICIENT OR DEVIANT, COGNITIVE STYLES; THAT THERE IS NO ONE WAY OF KNOWING AND PROCESSING INFORMATION; THAT DIFFERENT STYLES REFLECT DIVERSE SOCIOCULTURAL ANTECEDENTS; AND THAT THERE ARE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN VARIOUS STYLES OF LEARNING.

ACCOMMODATION OF DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS IS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE SINCE THE CHILD'S ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SELF AND OTHERS AND TOWARD SUCCESS OR FAILURE ARE SO CRITICAL AND STILL MALLEABLE DURING THIS TIME. ACCEPTANCE AND APPRECIATION OF ALL GROUPS OF CHILDREN WITH THEIR DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AND LEARNING REQUIREMENTS IS BASIC TO MULTICULTURAL EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHING.

RESEARCH ON ETHNIC MINORITY FAMILIES:
- CHARACTERISTICS AND A WARNING

A WARNING IS IN ORDER CONCERNING MUCH OF THE RESEARCH ON ETHNIC MINORITY FAMILIES. OFTEN IT HAS ENTRENCHED SOME FIRMLY HELD MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES ABOUT FAMILIES. MOYNIHAN'S 1965 STUDY PERPETUATED ONE OF THOSE MYTHS--THAT OF THE POOR, BLACK FAMILY BEING DISORGANIZED AND UNSTABLE. THIS IS A NOTION, GENERALLY ACCEPTED BY TEACHERS AS AN EXPLANATION OF SCHOOL FAILURE, WHICH IS NOT SUPPORTED BY RESEARCH. CARNEY AND BOWEN (1980, P. 120) SUGGEST THAT FOR MOST WHITE SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, "SOCIAL PROBLEMS, DISORGANIZATION, AND PATHOLOGY FORM THE LENS THROUGH WHICH BLACK FAMILY LIFE IS VIEWED." SUCH RESEARCH LOOKS AT BLACK FAMILIES IN RELATION TO OTHER GROUPS AND FAILS TO CONSIDER THE UNIQUE BLACK EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES. CARNEY AND BOWEN SAY THAT TRADITIONAL STUDIES IGNORE "THE VAST DOMAIN OF DIVERSITY WITHIN THE BLACK COMMUNITY ... THE ROLE OF RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, FOLKLORE, LEGEND, AND MYTH IN FAMILY DEVELOPMENT..." (1980, P. 121). A SIMILAR INDICTMENT CAN BE MADE ABOUT RESEARCH ON NATIVE-AMERICAN AND MEXICAN-AMERICAN FAMILIES, ESPECIALLY THAT WHICH ASSUMES A MONOLITHIC SAMENESS FOR A GROUP AND THAT WHICH CONFOUNDS ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL CLASS. BURGESS (1980, P. 63) POINTS OUT THAT THERE ARE SOME COMMON VALUES AND CHARACTERISTICS WHICH CONSISTENTLY APPEAR WITHIN AND

AMONG NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBAL GROUPS, SUCH AS VALUING CHILDREN ABOVE MATERIAL POSSESSIONS AND TEACHING CHILDREN THAT THE LAND IS FOR CARE, NOT EXPLOITATION. HOWEVER, HE AND OTHERS EMPHASIZE THAT GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT NATIVE AMERICANS TEND TO PROMOTE STEREOTYPIC THINKING. THUS, IT IS BEST TO CONSIDER VALUES WITHIN A TRIBAL OR REGIONAL CONTEXT. SIMILARLY, THE DIVERSITY AMONG AND BETWEEN HISPANIC GROUPS MUST BE KEPT IN MIND.

SOME AREAS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER AREAS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES? OFTEN OUR "EDUCATED" PERSPECTIVE OF CHILDREARING IS ETHNOCENTRIC. WE FAIL TO RECOGNIZE THAT MOST CHILDREN, NOW AS IN THE PAST, GROW UP IN CULTURES VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF MIDDLE-CLASS WHITE AMERICANS. TEACHERS NEED TO BE EQUIPPED WITH A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE TO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THAT CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS VALUED BY MIDDLE CLASS STANDARDS (SUCH AS EFFICIENCY, COMPETITION, AND A FUTURE ORIENTATION) ARE NOT UNIVERSALLY VALUED. OTHER AREAS WE TEND TO FOCUS ON ARE COGNITIVE RATHER THAN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT; AND SELF-RELIANCE, SELF-CONFIDENCE, AND INDEPENDENCE WHICH OFTEN COME AT THE EXPENSE OF INTERDEPENDENCE, COOPERATION, AND CONCERN FOR THE GROUP. ACCORDING TO MITCHELL AND WATSON (1980, PP. 157-158),

EVERY CULTURE HAS A FORMULA FOR PARENTAL BEHAVIOR THAT IS RELATIVELY STABLE OVER TIME. IF WE ARE TO EDUCATE CHILDREN IN OUR CULTURALLY PLURALISTIC SOCIETY WITHOUT DISRUPTING THEIR TIES TO FAMILIES AND CULTURES, WE MUST UNDERSTAND HOW THE FAMILY EDUCATES. AS EDUCATORS, WE NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE STYLES OF LEARNING VALUED WITHIN THE FAMILY SETTING.

THE SAME AUTHORS SUGGEST FIVE AREAS OF MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THE FAMILY. THEY ARE: (1) THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL VERSUS THE GROUP, OR COMPETITION VERSUS COOPERATION; (2) WAYS OF VERBAL INTERACTION AND THE CULTURALLY SPECIFIC RULES FOR TALKING TO OTHERS; (3) PHYSICAL COMMUNICATION, ITS USES AND CHARACTERISTICS; (4) WRITTEN VERSUS AURAL COMMUNICATION; (5) AND ORIENTATION TOWARD TIME.

ONE EXAMPLE CONCERNING VERBAL INTERACTIONS WILL SUFFICE TO ILLUSTRATE THE POSSIBLE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CULTURE OF THE HOME AND SCHOOL CULTURE. QUESTIONING IS A COMMON, FAVORITE CLASSROOM TECHNIQUE TO ELICIT RESPONSE AND PARTICIPATION FROM CHILDREN. THIS TECHNIQUE USUALLY MEETS WITH SUCCESS FROM MIDDLE CLASS JEWISH CHILDREN, FOR THEY GROW UP EXPECTING ADULT QUESTIONING AND MUTUAL DISCUSSION. HOWEVER, QUESTIONING DOES NOT MEET WITH MUCH SUCCESS WITH MANY BLACK CHILDREN BECAUSE IT IS NOT GENERALLY A METHOD OF FRIENDLY

INTERACTION WITHIN THE FAMILY. THEY OFTEN INTERPRET QUESTIONING AND ANSWERING AS HOSTILE SINCE IT MOST USUALLY OCCURS AT HOME WHEN THE ADULT IS ANGRY (MITCHELL AND WATSON, P. 158).

WHAT CAN WE DO TO ADAPT SCHOOLS TO MEET NEEDS OF CHILDREN FROM DIVERSE FAMILY BACKGROUNDS?

GRANTED THAT WE AS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS ARE AWARE OF THE DIVERSE FAMILY ARRANGEMENTS AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES WHICH CHILDREN BRING TO SCHOOL, WHAT CAN WE DO TO ADAPT OUR CLASSROOMS TO MEET THEIR NEEDS MORE EFFECTIVELY?

THROUGH OUR OBSERVATION AS TEACHERS, WE KNOW THAT THE CHILD'S EXPERIENCE AND SOCIAL INTERACTION IN THE HOME CAN HAVE BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON THE CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT. THE TEACHER MUST BE AWARE OF FACTORS IN THE CHILD'S SOCIOCULTURAL WORLD WHICH HAVE THE POTENTIAL OF IMPEDING OR ENHANCING HIS/HER FULL DEVELOPMENT. HAVING THIS KNOWLEDGE ENABLES THE TEACHER TO CREATE AND IMPLEMENT A RESPONSIVE MULTICULTURAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL YOUNG CHILDREN. WHILE THERE ARE NO FOOL-PROOF TECHNIQUES FOR CREATING CLASSROOMS THAT REINFORCE A CHILD'S FAMILY CULTURE, HERE ARE SOME POSSIBILITIES WE CAN CONSIDER. ONE IS THE CONCEPT OF DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES.

DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

YOUNG CHILDREN CAN UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPTS THAT "PEOPLE AND FAMILIES ARE DIFFERENT" AND THAT "PEOPLE AND FAMILIES ARE THE SAME." IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE TEACHER OF YOUNG CHILDREN EXPLORES DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES FROM THE CHILD'S-EYE VIEW. DISCUSSIONS FROM THE CHILD'S POINT OF VIEW COULD CENTER ON SUCH QUESTIONS AS THESE: "IS TOMMY AS TALL AS MARY?" "DOES SAM HAVE THE SAME COLOR (OR TEXTURE) OF HAIR AS RAMONE?" "WHO HAS FRECKLES IN THE ROOM?" "WHAT OTHER PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES CAN YOU SEE?" "YES, MARY I'M ALOT TALLER THAN YOU ARE." "DO THESE DIFFERENCES MEAN ONE PERSON IS BETTER THAN ANOTHER?" SUCH A "GOOD-BAD" VALUE QUESTION ABOUT BEING DIFFERENT CAN HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON YOUNG CHILDREN WHEN ASSOCIATED INITIALLY WITH PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES, (PARKER, 1977, P. 13). DIFFERENCES IN FAMILIES AND IN ETHNIC GROUPS CAN BE ASSESSED FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF UNIQUENESS, WHAT IS SPECIAL AND IMPORTANT ABOUT THE FAMILY OR THE GROUP.

AFTER DISCUSSING PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PEOPLE, THE TEACHER CAN LEAD THE CHILDREN TO EXPLORE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, EMPHASIZING THE REASONS FOR THESE DIFFERENCES IN TERMS THE CHILDREN CAN UNDERSTAND. FOR EXAMPLE, NOBUKO, A JAPANESE FOUR YEAR OLD--IN ADDITION TO HAVING SOME PHYSICAL AND LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES--MAY ALSO HAVE SOME CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS WHICH GIVE THE TEACHER

AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND THE CHILDREN'S AWARENESS OF THE UNIQUE CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF DIFFERENT FAMILIES. NOBUKO MAY HAVE A DOLL COLLECTION TO SHARE WHICH HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN TO HER FROM PAST GENERATIONS. OR HER MOTHER MAY BE WILLING TO COME TO SCHOOL AND PREPARE A TEMPURA FOR DEEP FRYING SHRIMP AND VEGETABLES FOR THE CHILDREN TO TASTE. SEEING AND TOUCHING THE TRADITIONAL CLOTHING OF THE JAPANESE FAMILY IS ALSO A WAY FOR THE CHILDREN TO CONCRETELY EMPATHIZE WITH NOBUKO AND HER CULTURE.

JUST AS YOUNG CHILDREN NEED CONCRETE, "CLOSE TO HOME" EXPERIENCES TO UNDERSTAND PHYSICAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, THEY CAN ALSO LEARN ABOUT SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PEOPLE THROUGH EXAMPLES DRAWN FROM THEIR OWN SCHOOL GROUP. LET'S LISTEN IN ON ANOTHER CLASSROOM CONVERSTAION. "RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU HAVE BLACK HAIR. OH, I SEE THAT FIVE OF YOU HAVE BLACK HAIR. BUT HOW MANY HAVE CURLY BLACK HAIR? THAT S RIGHT, THREE. WHO HAS BLOND HAIR LIKE MINE? MARY, SAM, NEDRA, FRANCINE, AND ARNIE. FIVE OF YOU HAVE BLOND HAIR." THE TEACHER CAN EXPAND THIS DISCUSSION TO INCLUDE COMPARISON OF SIMILARITIES WITH ANOTHER GROUP OF CHILDREN, SUCH AS MS. DENNISON'S NEXT DOOR CLASS OF FOUR YEAR OLDS. "HOW IS OUR CLASS LIKE MS. DENNISON'S? YES, MOST OF THE CHILDREN ARE FOUR YEARS OLD, TOO. GOOD TONY, BOTH OF OUR CLASSES HAVE BOYS AND GIRLS, AND BOTH CLASSES GET TO HAVE JUICE AND CRACKERS AT SNACK TIME."

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CULTURAL GROUPS AND FAMILIES CAN BE EXPLORED THROUGH TOPICS THAT ARE COMMON TO THE LIVES OF ALL CHILDREN, SUCH AS FAMILY UNITS AND HOMES AND CELEBRATIONS OR HOLIDAYS. WHILE VARYING FROM CULTURE TO CULTURE, HOLIDAYS DO CONTAIN SOME COMMONALITIES. BY SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT EACH OTHER'S CELEBRATIONS, THE YOUNG CHILD LEARNS THAT MOST PEOPLE HAVE GIFT GIVING OCCASIONS AND THAT OFTEN GAMES ARE TIED TO THESE CELEBRATIONS. OTHER AREAS OF COMMONALITY BETWEEN CULTURAL FAMILY GROUPS WHICH YOUNG CHILDREN CAN UNDERSTAND AND ENJOY ARE FOLK TOYS, CRAFTS AND ART, MUSIC, FOLK TALES AND HEROES, DRESS, FOODS, GAMES, AND DANCES. SUCH COMMONALITIES TRANSCEND TIME AND PRODUCE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS.

ONE WAY IN WHICH YOUNG CHILDREN CAN EXPERIENCE THE CONCEPTS OF SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PEOPLE IS FOR THE TEACHER TO ARRANGE A VISIT TO ANOTHER SCHOOL WHERE THE CHILDREN COME FROM FAMILIES WITH DIFFERENT ECONOMIC OR CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS.

STILL ANOTHER EXCELLENT MEANS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN TO GROW IN UNDERSTANDING OF SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS OF PEOPLE IS TO INVITE COMMUNITY RESOURCE PEOPLE OR "CULTURAL CARRIERS" TO THE CLASSROOM. "CULTURAL CARRIERS" ARE THOSE PEOPLE WHO REMEMBER AND/OR CONTINUE TO PRACTICE THE UNIQUE WAYS OF THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE. OF COURSE, PARENTS OR THE EXTENDED

FAMILY OF THE YOUNGSTERS ARE A NATURAL SOURCE OF "CULTURAL CARRIERS," BUT THEY MAY ALSO BE COMMUNITY MEMBERS, FRIENDS, AND NEIGHBORS. WHEN A TEACHER BEGINS THIS SEARCH IN EARNEST AND OPENS THE DOOR TO THEM, IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT "CULTURAL CARRIERS" LITERALLY SURROUND THE SCHOOL. PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY, AND ESPECIALLY OLDER RETIRED FOLKS, FIND BEING A PART OF YOUNG CHILDREN'S LIVES VERY REWARDING.

AVOIDING STEREOTYPES

A WORD OF CAUTION IS IN ORDER FOR TEACHERS WHO INVOLVE "CULTURAL CARRIERS" IN THEIR CLASSROOMS, ESPECIALLY IN THOSE CLASSROOMS WHERE THE CHILDREN ARE FROM HOMOGENEOUS BACKGROUNDS. THAT IS, AVOID REINFORCING ANY OLD STEREOTYPES OR CREATING NEW ONES ABOUT GROUPS OF PEOPLE. IF FOR EXAMPLE, A NATIVE AMERICAN VISITS THE CLASSROOM TO DO A DANCE IN COSTUME AND TO SHOW CULTURAL ARTIFACTS, SUCH AS DRUMS OR JEWELRY, HELP THE CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THE TRADITIONAL NATURE OF THE DANCE AND HOW IT RELATES TO THE LIVES OF NATIVE AMERICANS NOW. THE TEACHER MIGHT SAY: "ALL NATIVE AMERICANS DO NOT WEAR THIS KIND OF COSTUME, BUT SOME DO ON SPECIAL DAYS." HELP THE CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THE TIME-FRAME (SUCh AS, "A LONG TIME AGO OR NOW-A-DAYS") OF ANY CULTURAL EVENT AND THE "WHYS AND WHEREFORES" OF A PARTICULAR EVENT OR ARTIFACT. AGAIN: "NATIVE AMERICANS WOVE BEAUTIFUL BLANKETS TO KEEP WARM A LONG TIME AGO AND NOW THEY STILL MAKE

THEM TO USE, BUT THEY ALSO MAKE THEM TO SELL TO PEOPLE WHO LIKE THEIR BEAUTIFUL COLORS AND PATTERNS."

JUST AS WITH "CULTURAL CARRIERS," THE SENSITIVELY AWARE TEACHER WILL USE THE SAME KIND OF CAUTION IN AVOIDING OLD AND NEW STEREOTYPES IN ANY KIND OF CLASSROOM ACTIVITY, PRESENTATION, FILM, PICTURE, STORYBOOK, OR UNIT WHICH DEALS WITH A CULTURAL OR ETHNIC GROUP.

PART OF THE PERPETUATION OF HARMFUL STEREOTYPES ABOUT CULTURAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS LIES IN THE LANGUAGE WE USE. ASK, "WHEN DID I LAST SAY, 'NOW SIT IN OUR CIRCLE LIKE AN INDIAN' OR 'YOU KIDS ARE ACTING LIKE A BUNCH OF WILD INDIANS'." CHECK ON THE TIMES WHEN CLASSROOM COMMENTS REFLECT A NEGATIVE, DIRTY, OR "BAD" IMAGERY OF "BLACK." NOT ONLY ARE THESE, AND SIMILAR, RACIST AND SEXIST STEREOTYPES PART OF OUR "EVERYDAY" LANGUAGE, BUT THEY ARE BUILT INTO OUR FORMAL LANGUAGE; OUR DICTIONARIES ARE WITNESS TO THIS PHENOMENON.

INTEGRATION OF MULTICULTURAL CONCEPTS INTO THE CURRICULUM

WHAT CAN WE DO TO INTEGRATE MULTICULTURALISM INTO THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM? UNLESS A CONCEPT, TOPIC, OR SUBJECT IS SCHEDULED INTO THE STRUCTURE OF A CURRICULUM, IT IS DEBATABLE WHETHER IT WILL BE GIVEN ADEQUATE ATTENTION EVEN BY WELL-MEANING TEACHERS. A "HIT OR MISS" APPROACH--WITH FRAGMENTED BITS

OF INFORMATION, AN OCCASIONAL VISIT BY A "CULTURAL CARRIER," A FOCUS ON AFRO-AMERICANS DURING FEBRUARY OR A UNIT ON NATIVE AMERICANS DURING NOVEMBER--IS DOOMED TO FAILURE AND ONLY PAYS "LIP SERVICE" TO MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN. NEITHER CAN AN ADDITIVE APPROACH BE SUCCESSFUL. HERE, MULTICULTURAL CONCEPTS OR ACTIVITIES ARE "TACKED ON" TO A CURRICULUM THAT STAYS BASICALLY THE SAME.

MULTICULTURALISM MUST BE A REGULAR PART OF THE DAILY CURRICULUM, WOVEN INTO ALL PARTS OF THE CHILD'S DAY. IT SHOULD BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CHILD'S REGULAR ACTIVITIES. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE HOUSEKEEPING AREA, THERE SHOULD BE MEN AND WOMEN'S CLOTHES AND MULTI-RACIAL DOLLS. DRAMATIC PLAY ACTIVITIES SHOULD ENCOURAGE GIRLS TO ACT OUT NON-TRADITIONAL CAREER ROLES AND BOYS TO PLAY NURTURING, CARE-GIVING ROLES. MANIPULATIVE MATERIALS, SUCH AS PUZZLES, SHOULD SHOW CHILDREN AND ADULTS OF DIFFERENT RACES, GIRLS ENGAGED IN ACTIVE PLAY, AND WOMEN IN VARIED OCCUPATIONS. GIRLS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO PLAY WITH TRUCKS AND CONSTRUCT WITH BLOCKS, WHILE BOYS SHOULD KNOW THAT THEY CAN PLAY IN THE HOUSEKEEPING AREA AS WELL AS THE GIRLS.

IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS AND THE SOCIAL STUDIES, CHILDREN SHOULD DISCUSS, DRAMATIZE, AND HEAR STORIES ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN AND AMONG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES. PUPPETS, FLANNEL BOARD FIGURES, AND POSTERS

SHOULD BE MULTI-RACIAL. PICTURES AND STORIES USED IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS AND IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES SHOULD: HONESTLY PORTRAY DIFFERENT LIFE STYLES (E.G. DIVERSE FAMILY ARRANGEMENTS AND SEX ROLES); SHOW CHILDREN AND ADULTS OF DIFFERENT CULTURES AND RACES WORKING AND PLAYING TOGETHER; PORTRAY MEN SHARING HOMEMAKING AND CHILD-CARE ACTIVITIES; PRESENT GIRLS ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING RATHER THAN PASSIVELY WATCHING BOYS DO THINGS; AND IN GENERAL, CONVEY THAT THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS, MEN AND WOMEN OF ALL CULTURAL AND RACIAL GROUPS.

MORE ON MULTICULTURAL MATERIALS

ALL MATERIALS IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM SHOULD BE CULTURALLY FAIR AND UNBIASED BOTH IN CONTENT AND IN ILLUSTRATION. THEY SHOULD BE AUTHENTIC AND HONEST IN PORTRAYAL OF ALL GROUPS OF PEOPLE, INCLUDING FAMILIES. ACCURACY IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE. TEACHER-MADE MATERIALS MAY BE NECESSARY IF THE ONES AVAILABLE ARE BIASED OR INACCURATE; HOWEVER, A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE "OLD" ONES BY THE TEACHER AND CHILDREN MAY PROVIDE A VALUABLE LEARNING EXPERIENCE. WITH THE HELP OF ADULTS, CHILDREN MAY CREATE THEIR OWN BOOKS USING A LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES APPROACH WHICH REINFORCES THEIR FAMILY'S CULTURAL IDENTITY.

CLASSROOM CLIMATE AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

THE CLASSROOM CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT ARE CRITICAL DETERMINANTS OF THE YOUNG CHILD'S ABILITY TO REACH HIS/HER MAXIMUM POTENTIAL. CHILDREN NEED A

SETTING IN WHICH THEY CAN BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN EXPLORATION. THE NECESSITY OF FLEXIBILITY IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENT IS THE KEY TO AN EFFECTIVE INTEGRATIVE MULTICULTURAL PLAN. CHILDREN WITH DIFFERENT NEEDS AND FAMILY BACKGROUNDS MUST HAVE OPTIONS FOR MOVEMENT AND USE OF SPACE.

JUST AS IMPORTANT FOR THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN AS THE PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE CLASSROOM IS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IS ENHANCED BY A MULTI-SENSORY APPROACH TO TEACHING IN WHICH THE CHILD IS AN ACTIVE LEARNER INVOLVED IN PROBLEM SOLVING THROUGH INQUIRY AND DISCOVERY. ALL THE CHILD'S LEARNING DOMAINS ARE ACTIVATED: COGNITIVE, AFFECTIVE, AND PSYCHOMOTOR.

ANOTHER ASPECT OF CLASSROOM CLIMATE CONCERNS THE "FIT" OF THE INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION STYLES OF THE TEACHER AND THE CHILDREN. MOST SCHOOLS ARE INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE STYLES OF ETHNIC MINORITY CHILDREN BECAUSE OF THE SCHOOLS' INDIVIDUALISTIC, FORMAL CLIMATE; THEIR COMPETITIVENESS; THEIR EMPHASIS ON RATIONALITY AND THE WRITTEN TRADITION IN COMMUNICATION; AND IN THEIR LACK OF INTERACTIONAL AND COMMUNICATION PATTERNS WHICH INTEGRATE THE THREE LEARNING DOMAINS.

CONCERNING ACCOMMODATION OF THE CLASSROOM CLIMATE TO THE NEEDS OF BLACK CHILDREN, GAY (1977) SUGGESTS PLACING EMPHASIS ON EXPERIENCES AND ASSESSMENT

TECHNIQUES WHICH USE "AURAL AND PERFORMANCE INCLINATIONS, EMPLOY MORE INFORMAL CLASSROOM CLIMATES, AND FOCUS ON CONSENSUS-BASED, COOPERATIVE, GROUP-CENTERED LEARNING ACTIVITIES" (P. 55).

ALTHOUGH A TEACHER MAY BE SAYING THE "RIGHT" WORDS TO A CHILD, HIS/HER NON-VERBAL CUES (GESTURES, FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, INTONATION) MAY CONVEY A TOTALLY DIFFERENT MESSAGE. ESPECIALLY WITH THE LIMITED- OR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING CHILD MUST THE TEACHER BE AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF NON-VERBAL NUANCES, FOR THESE ARE THE CHILD'S MAIN WAY OF ABSORBING MEANING FROM AN OTHERWISE UNINTELLIGIBLE JUMBLE OF WORDS. A PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE CONDUCIVE TO EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN WHICH RESPECTS THEIR FAMILY BACKGROUNDS IS OPEN, INFORMAL, SPONTANEOUS, AND ACCEPTING OF DIVERSE INTERACTION, LEARNING, AND COMMUNICATION STYLES.

IN SUM, AN INTEGRATIVE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION HELPS CHILDREN INTERNALIZE THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE MANY PARTS OF THEIR ENVIRONMENT. THIS APPROACH GIVES MEANING TO THE DIVERSE ELEMENTS IN A CHILD'S DAY. IT SEEKS TO EDUCATE THE "WHOLE CHILD" AS A UNIQUE HUMAN BEING AND TO PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR EACH CHILD TO REACH HIS/HER MAXIMUM POTENTIAL AND RETAIN HIS/HER UNIQUE FAMILY HERITAGE.

THE ADVENT OF THE CONCEPT OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE EARLY 1970'S REFLECTED A CHANGE IN OUR VIEW OF SOCIETY AND EDUCATION. EFFORTS TO CHARACTERIZE

THE UNITED STATES AS A "MELTING POT" IN WHICH CULTURAL DIFFERENCES WOULD EVENTUALLY DISAPPEAR GRADUALLY BEGAN TO ADJUST TO A VIEW OF OUR SOCIETY AS A KIND OF "SALAD BOWL" WITH EACH GROUP REFLECTING ITS ETHNIC IDENTITY AND ITS AMERICAN EXPERIENCE. WHILE A MULTICULTURAL VIEW OF SOCIETY AND EDUCATION HAS NOT FULLY TAKEN ROOT, THE CONCEPT HAS PROVIDED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS WITH A FRAMEWORK IN WHICH TO ADVOCATE PROGRAM CHANGE THAT IS NOT BASED ON A DEFICIT MODEL OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.

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